

# Things you *really* need to learn on the first day of the Health Services Materiel Officer Course

By: Thomas S. Wieczorek

## 1. Pronunciation and use of key logistics terms.

### a. Material v. Materiel.

(1) Material: the substance of which something is made; apparatus necessary for doing or making something. If you were going to make a dress, for example, you would go to the store and buy material.

(2) Materiel: equipment and supplies used by a business or military organization. If you were to deploy, you would load your materiel onto your trucks.

### b. Depot (dE-pO) v. Depot (Dep-O).

(1) Depot (dE-pO): a building for railroad, bus, or airplane passengers; a station. A train pulls into a depot to pick up passengers.

(2) Depot (Dep-O): a storehouse where military supplies are kept. Certain military-unique equipment must be ordered from a depot.

### c. Preventative v. Preventive.

(1) Preventative: the improper spelling of *Preventive*. If you want to be the laughingstock of your unit, tell people that you are in charge of the Preventative Maintenance program for medical equipment.

(2) Preventive: the proper spelling for the word which means “to keep from happening.”

## 2. Five reasons why the Army Medical Department, not the Quartermaster Corps, has medical logisticians to manage Class VIII medical supplies:

a. On 20 July 1967, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed that medical materiel be designated as a separate class of supply (Class VIII) and that it should be managed by specifically trained personnel because of its distinct characteristics.

b. Medical logistics is an integral part of the Army Medical Department and the military healthcare continuum. It is inextricably woven among all of the medical services provided by the Army—hospitalization, evacuation, dental services, veterinary services, laboratory services, optometry services, preventive medicine, and maintenance services—all of which focus ultimately on the patient. A specialist who understands the needs of the patient and places the patient first, therefore, must be the one who manages Class VIII.

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c. No item of medical materiel is issued to a patient except at the express direction of a member of the Army Medical Department. The judgment of a physician, the peculiarities of the patient's condition, and the variable time factor between life and death are all factors that are understood by members of the Army Medical Department. With this understanding comes the appropriate degree of *responsiveness*. A person cannot manage medical materiel without understanding the medical environment. (If a spare part for a truck does not arrive in time, the truck might be deadlined. If the materiel that a patient requires does not arrive in time, the outcome could be fatal.)

d. Managing Class VIII requires knowing about all of its unique characteristics and handling requirements, which include: expiration-dated materiel; items requiring freezing; items requiring refrigeration; flammable, corrosive, and radioactive items; handling controlled narcotics; security of key items (hypodermic needles, syringes, precious metals); and handling blood and blood products.

e. Medical logisticians fall under the protective umbrella of the Geneva Convention, just as the rest of Army Medical Department personnel do. Strict adherence to the provisions of the Geneva Convention precludes the storage of medical materiel with other commodities. Medical logisticians are limited to self-defense and protecting patients with *small arms weaponry*.

## 3. Favorite logistics quotes I've heard in person:

(1) "If logistics was exciting, John Wayne would have made a movie about it!" (Brian R. O'Leary)

(2) "The hospital log guys are the box kickers, label-lickers, located in the basement, next to the morgue (with no windows)." (Brian R. O'Leary)

(3) "There are two types of log officers: hustlers and bums." (Brian R. O'Leary)

(4) "You don't steal...you appropriate! You're logisticians!" (Brain R. O'Leary)

(5) "Logistician: the guy who makes you think that he's doing you a favor when he's really just doing his job." (Brian R. O'Leary)

(6) "If you're going to lie, keep to the same story!" (Brain R. O'Leary)

(7) "A guy came into my office and said, 'I need six bottles of this.' I said, 'Oh yeah, how does it feel to *need*?!'" (Brian R. O'Leary)

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(8) “The man with the knowledge is the man with the power!” (William A. Motley, Jr.)

(9) “Educate your customers on supply.” (William A. Motley, Jr.)

(10) “Lack of prior planning doesn’t constitute an emergency in this office.” (William A. Motley, Jr.)

(11) “Don’t cook the books to hide a zero balance.” (William A. Motley, Jr.)

(12) “Corrupt logisticians make me sick!” (Thomas S. Wieczorek)

(13) “I will *not* not support you!” (Anthony J. Lopiccio, Jr.)

## 4. Commentary:

(1) Medical logisticians who run supply operations are powerful people because they control “stuff” that people will always want and need.

(2) Good logisticians use their power to take care of their customers, i.e., health care providers and patients, in an extremely responsive manner.

(3) Bad logisticians are ill-motivated people who let power go to their heads as they try to run their own selfish empires.